

The Hague,
July 16, '76.

Dear Lai Huat,

I will first quote from your letter:

"In many parts of the Tipitaka moha, dosa and lobha have always been mentioned again and again. This just shows the great, significant role these three unwholesome mental factors play in our daily life. In fact it pre-decides our akusala actions and words. They just come and go, but although they have gone, the harm has been done. So to prevent such a state of affair, what do you think is the most suitable and appropriate counter action at least to suppress these hatred, greed and ignorance that are in us?"

It is said that when dosa arises, we should cultivate the opposite virtue (loving kindness). But it has also been mentioned that we cannot shower loving-kindness on someone we like (e.g. girl-friend), because it would give rise to lobha. So my question is, should we in this instant cultivate opposites like dosa in order to suppress lobha?"

You then finish your letter saying: "These are the kind of things youth these days encounter" and you say that you will share our discussion with your Dhamma friends.

I quoted all this, because I am really heartened that young people in Malaysia want to apply the Dhamma in daily life and have such an interest. I would like other readers of this letter (in different countries) to know this as well.

It is true that the three unwholesome roots (akusala hetus) play a big role in our daily life, time and again akusala cittas arise because we have accumulated such an amount of ignorance, clinging, aversion and all kinds of defilements. Even though we want to prevent them from arising they have arisen already before we know it; they arise because of conditions, they are anattā, not self.

You wonder what can be done in order to have less akusala. The Buddha encouraged people to cultivate all kinds of kusala: dāna (generosity), sīla (morality) and bhāvanā (mental development) which includes studying or explaining Dhamma, samatha (tranquil meditation) and vipassanā. The Buddha's teaching is a condition for kusala and when there are kusala cittas there cannot be akusala cittas at the same time. With every kusala citta there are the wholesome mental factors of alobha (non-attachment) and adosa (non-hate) arising, and sometimes paññā as well. Thus, when there is mettā, for instance, one is

helping someone, there are in any case both alobha and adosa. When there is mettā there cannot be lobha at the same time, but lobha is bound to arise shortly afterwards, again and again, because we have accumulated it. The Buddha never taught to cultivate dosa in order to suppress lobha, because dosa is akusala. He taught mettā for all living beings, no matter big or small, far or near, born or unborn. This includes one's girlfriend. When one is engaged or married one should help one's partner. If there never were generosity and unselfishness too in these relationships, only lobha, life is wasted away. There is bound to be lobha in our lives, who can stop it, there are conditions for it. But at the moments of kusala at least there is no unwholesomeness. It is not 'us' who perform kusala, but kusala cittas arise because of their own conditions: our former accumulations of kusala, the studying of the Buddha's teachings, listening to the 'good friend in Dhamma'.

In the 'Visuddhimagga' (IX, 98) in the description about the meditation subjects for samatha, the 'near enemies' and the 'far enemies' are mentioned for the 'divine abidings' which can be meditation subject. The far enemy of mettā is dosa and this is clear, it is an opposite. The near enemy is lobha: 'Greed is the near enemy of Lovingkindness since it is able to corrupt owing to its similarity, like an enemy masquerading a friend.' (Paramattha-mañjūsā).

That is true, before we know it, cittas with lobha arise and we may take the lobha for mettā, unless we are mindful of different realities. Cittas succeed one another so very quickly. Cittas with lobha can be accompanied by pleasant feeling and since we cling to pleasant feeling we may not know that an akusala citta has arisen. Thus now we can see how necessary vipassanā is, mindfulness of different realities as they appear in daily life through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense and mind. Mindfulness of the mental phenomena (nāma) and physical phenomena (rūpa) which appear in our daily life is by far the best way to have less akusala in our lives, moreover, finally it is the way to eradicate akusala. If there is no mindfulness of nāma and rūpa we do not know whether cittas are kusala or akusala, most often we mix them up. Even when we cultivate dāna and sīla but we do not cultivate mindfulness, we stay very ignorant of the far and near enemies which keep on arising — unnoticed!

The Visuddhimagga (IX, 4) explains that those who cultivate the meditation subject of mettā should in the beginning not think

of a loved person or a hostile person, etc. Otherwise they may be disturbed while ^(they develop) the meditation subject. Those who — — — ?

have great accumulations for jhāna (absorption-concentration) and lead a secluded life in order to concentrate on one of the 'divine abidings', can attain jhāna. —————→

————— They have to cultivate the right conditions in order to attain jhāna, which is extremely difficult,

only very few can do it. One cannot cultivate samatha seriously for just an hour a day, it is a very special procedure one has to follow and it is fully described in the Visuddhimagga.

Vipassanā can be cultivated in one's daily life and one does not have to be in seclusion for vipassana. Vipassanā is the best way to counteract unwholesomeness. However, the first aim is the eradication of the wrong view of self and only later all the other defilements can be eradicated. Wrong view is so dangerous there is nothing more dangerous than wrong view it is said in the teachings. (I can still hear Khun Sujin say this while we were on pilgrimage in India. In Thai it sounds more impressive! This I write for my friends in Thailand who read this letter) When we believe that we see a person there is wrong view. Through eyes only visible object, colour, that which appears just through eyes, can be seen. A person is a concept we can think of, but a person is not a reality. What we take for a person are many different nāmas and rūpas. One may think: what does it help me in daily life if I know that I do not see my girlfriend? It seems even cruel and unrealistic. No, it is wholesome and, when the citta is wholesome there are a-dosa and a-lobha with the citta. Of course, the next moment lobha may arise, but also that is a reality which can be known by another citta with mindfulness of the lobha. In vipassanā we do not suppress lobha, ^{but} cultivate the wisdom which knows realities, lobha included. Thus, we do not change our life at all, it goes on like before. The difference is: that paññā is being cultivated which has more understanding of the realities of our life. When there is, just for a moment, mindfulness of what appears through the eyes, visible object, it helps us to take it less for 'something' 'somebody' (the girlfriend). Wholesomeness never does harm to us or to others, we are at such a moment not selfish and does this not lead to the wellbeing for ourselves and others? It brings us in a condition that we can better help the other person and we can find this out in our own life, everybody for himself.

Is there no seeing now, the experience of what appears through the eyes? No need to wait, its characteristic can be experienced and in this way we will learn that seeing is not thinking at all. That seeing is different from hearing, the experience of just sound through the ears. When you are reading, you understand the meaning of the letters and that is not seeing but thinking. However, there are moments of seeing too in between, how could you read otherwise? When you listen to words people are speaking, you understand the meaning of the words. That is not hearing but thinking. There must be moments of hearing in between too, otherwise you could not know what people are saying. The experience of sound is hearing, and it is different from the sound itself which is rūpa, a reality which does not know anything. I have given now just a few examples, and could you ask Goh to lend you the copy of the letter to Dr. Wimalajeewa I send to her. Here I discuss more on vipassanā. You are wellcome if you have more points on nāma and rūpa you would like to discuss.

It is good if there can be a few moments of mindfulness in between the countless akusala cittas in a day. We attach so much to all we experience through the six doors, to beloved people, to our dear 'self', to our body. If there can be moments we take it less for self, for somebody, for something, for so important, it helps us in life because ^{from} everything that is dear we have to be separated once because of the impermanence of conditioned realities. Wisdom can help us in days of great loss and sorrow.

Kind regards,

Nina.